Understanding the Evolution of Political Cultures in France, England and U.S.A.
Sofia Kavlin

What does a shifting political culture say about electorate voting tendencies and the state of democracy?

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Introduction

Almond and Verba wrote *The Civic Culture* (1989) in a world marked by the end of the Cold War and what seemed to be the victory of western style democracy and liberal norms over communism. With the expansion of democracy and liberal values, Almond and Verba predicted a ‘participation explosion’, where the ordinary man would become increasingly aware of himself as a political actor. Nevertheless, an increase in a culture of participation can ultimately grow to contest political actors or even the political system itself. This is often seen with the rise of populist parties claiming that government institutions and “the political class have lost contact with the real people”. With the rise of populist parties in many Western countries, this study aims to analyze the link between the shifting political culture of a country and the rise of anti-establishment parties.

We focus on three developed countries with mature democracies and a history of liberal values: United States, England and France. Almond and Verba emphasize the importance of political culture in sustaining or threatening democratic political structure. Thus, starting from the author’s original statement, this study will attempt to determine the extent to which political cultures and orientations are good predictors of new party allegiances and the relative stability of contemporary political systems. Is political culture as described by Almond and Verba a good predictor of current party allegiances and, furthermore, can it predict a possible shift in the political structure? This study will seek to verify two main hypothesis:

- H1. Political culture and orientation are good indicators of party allegiance trends; and
- H2. Political culture and orientation predict a possible shift in the political system itself.

In the following section we will explain the foundations of Almond and Verba’s theory of political culture, offering a summary of the main concepts developed in *The Civic Culture* and their relevance to this particular study.

Theoretical Groundwork

- Defining Political Culture and Political Objects

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Political culture is defined by Almond and Verba as a set of political orientations, encompassing a series of attitudes towards the political system as well as the role of the self in the system. The political culture of a country is determined by the affective and cognitive relationship of its citizens towards several political objects:

1. **The system as a general object**: This first element refers to the general knowledge of the population in regards to their political system. There is also an affective relationship at play which depends on the citizen’s sentiment towards the political system (i.e. representative democracy). This relationship ranges from a sense of pride to a sense of mistrust towards political institutions.

2. **Input Objects**: Referring to the flow of demands from the society into the policy, as expressed through political representation (i.e. political parties, interest groups). In practice, this is conveyed through the degree of trust that citizen’s place on the ability of political parties to carry out their demands and translate them into policies.

3. **Output Objects**: Refers to the process by which authoritative policies are applied and enforced through political institutions (i.e. Parliament). The affective relationship between the citizen and output objects can be measured through the degree of faith that the citizen places on the ability of political institutions to enforce law.

4. **Self as active participant**: Refers to patterns of political participation and the level of civic competence in the country in question. The sense of the individual as an active participant in the political realm depends on whether he or she feels that they can influence political outcomes by means of activism, lobbying, or other forms of engagement.

Almond and Verba emphasize the importance of choice and personal opinion in shaping party affiliations instead of relying on the social-cleavage explanation (age, education and income as determining factors). Hence, throughout this study the four political objects listed above will be used to describe the relationship between citizens and political elements. We will seek to determine the influence of citizen attitudes and opinions in determining political behavior, and finally whether these are good indicators of a possible shift in core political values and systems.

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**Dimensions of Political Orientation**

This study relies on data from the World Value Survey and the European Values Study to illustrate the dominant political orientations of the countries in question at a certain period of

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time. When considered on individual, homogenous basis, political cultures are described by Almond and Verba in the following ways: 1. In a **parochial** system, the frequency of orientation towards any of the four political objects approach zero. It is characterized by political remoteness and an absence of either knowledge or affection towards the political system. 2. In a **subject** political culture, the citizen is aware of ‘a specialized government authority’ and evaluates it either positively or negatively. The subject citizen tends to have an affective and normative orientation towards the concerned political objects meaning he is aware of their existence but chooses to neglect or not acknowledge them based on ideology or principle. 3. A **participant** political culture concerns citizens who are explicitly oriented to ‘both the output and input aspects of the political system’. Participant culture is characterized by widespread political knowledge and a positive evaluation of institutions and political actors. Citizens are aware of their active political role although their feelings towards the system may vary from positive to negative.

It is important to note that it is impossible to define the political culture and orientations of a country within a single category. For this reason, different categories may be combined when referring to a single case, thus encapsulating the heterogenous character of any particular society. We will focus on the ways in which parochial, subject and participant orientations have combined in order to direct political development and cultural change over the past decade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Objects</th>
<th>System as General Object</th>
<th>Input objects</th>
<th>Output Objects</th>
<th>Self as active participant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parochial</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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4 Ibid., 17.
5 Ibid., 18.
6 Ibid., 19.
Where 0 corresponds to negative and 1 corresponds to positive attitudes towards the objects in question, a correlation is made between the level of political interest displayed by the population enquired and the corresponding political orientation. Thus, disinterest for every political object corresponds to a parochial system, a high score for only the system as general object and output objects corresponds to a subject culture and a high level of interest for every objects corresponds to a participant political culture. The dominant trends of political orientation in a particular country would hypothetically allow us to determine the level of congruence between the political culture and the political structure; a congruent political culture would display high positive rates of orientation to all four classes of political objects. According to Almond and Verba’s theory, a “parochial, subject or participant culture would be most congruent with, respectively, a traditional political structure, a centralized authoritarian structure or a democratic political structure”.

In the following segment, we will draw empirical data from the World Value Survey and the European Value surveys in order to analyze the importance of political culture in influencing party allegiances and support for the wider political system as posed in the two hypotheses made in our introduction.

**Application of Political Orientation Theory to Individual Case Studies**

According to Almond and Verba, key factor for the viability of democracy is a political culture which is in alignment with the regime structure. The authors point to high political exposure, high participation in voluntary associations, high degree of pride in political institutions and a high level of social trust as the main components of a participant culture in alignment with a democratic regime.

We focused on United States, France and England to verify or discredit our hypothesis. These are three countries that have had a democratic political development which positioned individual rights and liberalism as their main ideological guidelines. This form of democratic participatory model, positioning the citizen at the heart of political structures, requires a political culture capable of sustaining democratic governance in the long run. The study explicitly makes the difference between party allegiance and congruence towards political structure because the

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7 Ibid., 20.
8 Ibid., 15.
citizen’s relationship towards the party system is subject to short term fluctuations whereas his relationship to the system is more stable over a long period of time. In other words, discontent towards the party system is not synonymous with disapproval towards the democratic system in general. A functional democratic model is therefore characterized by its capacity to react to shifting opinions in order to tailor the new government to the changes in civic ideology.

Nevertheless, if the populations lose faith in the Government’s capacity to adapt to its demands, the risk is a potential loss of legitimacy of the democratic model in the eyes of the public. Taking this into account, we are interested in the shifts of political culture and orientations in the years leading up to what seems to be a crisis in democracy, for both Europe and the United States.

Since the 2008 financial crisis, European citizens seem to have lost trust in their governments and in the European institutions themselves. Georgina Waylen argues that many democracies have been suffering a crisis of representation, participation and legitimacy in the past few decades.9 “The dis-functional elements of long-standing democracies such as gridlock in the US, disillusionment in the EU and the increased political leverage of international institutions such as banks and IFI’s (International Financial Institutions) have led to voter disengagement and a lack of trust in government institutions”.10 In 2013 David Cameron gave his Bloomberg speech about a withdrawal of England from the EU if the latter continued to insist on a political union. Furthermore, in France the extreme-right, self-declared anti-European Front National headed by Marine Le Pen won 32% of the French seats in the European parliament.11 As for the United States, disappointment with both politicians and institutions of government has drastically risen since 1975. According to American National Election Studies polls, in 1964, 76 percent of Americans agreed with the statement "You can trust the government in Washington to do what is right just about always or most of the time" In 2008, it was 30 percent. In January 2010, it had fallen to 19 percent.12

France, England and the United States have had a history of strong democratic institutions and corresponding values dating back to key events such as the French Revolution and the signing of the American Declaration of Independence. These historical events were

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10 Ibid.


central in building a strong degree of trust between citizens and Government Institutions as they emphasized the role of the Government in translating the will of the people into law. Due to this history, the 2008 financial crisis hit hard in these countries because it highlighted the inability of Government to prioritize their citizens when pressured by the International Community to implement austerity measures to reduce national debts. This was the main factor pointing to a democratic deficit, where compliance with the International Community or big interest groups (Banks, Oil Companies) was increasingly interpreted as an infringement on political autonomy.13

“They do not represent us” and “They call it democracy, but it is none” were two of the slogans heard in the ‘Indignados’ manifestation in Madrid in May 2011.14 These movements which were also seen in Portugal and the U.S with movements such as ‘Occupy Wall street’ which protested against the “normalization of economic and legal insecurity and the increased use of austerity as an instrument of the Government”.15 These past movements have given way to the rise in anti-establishment discourses and party dealignment trends that we are seeing nowadays. Scholars such as Peter Mair suggest that the changing character of political parties and voter disengagement has impacts on the legitimacy and effectiveness of modern democracy.16 Thus, in a time marked by disinterest and even hostility at the citizen level, we are interested in the role played by political culture in directing voting trends and support for government.

We have based the study on 4 survey questions from the European Value Survey and the World Value Survey databases in order to illustrate the shifts in the political culture of each of the countries.17 The European Values Survey (EVS) is a large-scale, cross-national and longitudinal survey research program based on basic human values carried out under the responsibility of the EVS foundation. In turn, the World Value Survey (WVS), from which we recovered data pertaining to the Unites States, is a global research project that explores people’s values and how they change over time as well as the social and political impact of these changes. Both organizations rely on the method of sampling. In both cases, representative random samples of the


15 Ibid.

16 Peter Mair Ruling the Void p 3

population of the country 18 years old and older are interviewed by professional survey organizations using standardized questionnaires. The activities of the EVS and WVS are funded by universities and research institutes in participating countries and the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation respectively. \(^1\) The following section will offer a comparative analysis of each political object and the public orientation towards it.

- **Determining level of confidence in political parties**

  In order to determine the level of trust of citizens towards dominant political parties, we based our analysis on the question ‘which political party would you vote for’? We are interested in the percentage of people marking the options ‘no answer’, ‘don’t know’ and ‘non applicable’ because these offer a good measure of the level of discontent towards the current party system. Abstention in general elections and withdrawal from traditional parties are often a reflection of an underlying crisis of legitimacy of the system of representation. The decision of an important segment of the population to abstain reflects more than contested political dialogue, it indicates that the population does not trust the party system to accurately express their discontent through the democratic system in place.

![Mistrust of Main Political Parties](image)

Sources: EVS - European Values Study 1999, 2008 - Integrated Dataset: Great Britain, France; World Value Survey waves 3 and 4: USA

In England, 18.4% did not give an answer in 1999 compared to 46.4% in 2008, in the U.S 17% chose not to answer in 2000-2004 compared to 43.5% between 2010 and 2014. This points to a heightened sense of discontent with the American bipartisan system as well as the system of representation in Great Britain. The political culture of both countries has shifted from a participant culture in the early 2000’s characterized by a high level of partisan identification to a subject-parochial culture marked by disinterest and discontent. On the contrary France has had a stable relationship with the representative system, keeping abstention and disapproval at 14% over the course of 9 years. This means that in what concerns France’s overall level of confidence towards political parties, the public sentiment still corresponds to an engaged participant political culture.

- **Determining confidence in political administrative units**

We chose to measure the civic evaluation of this political object by taking into account the public sentiment towards the parliamentary faction of government. This approach was chosen in order to analyze public opinion towards the role of parliament in the creation and enforcement of law. We considered the percentage of survey takers having answered ‘quite a lot’ when asked how much confidence they had in their national parliament.

![Graph showing confidence in bureaucracy (parliament) for Great Britain, France, U.S.A.](image)

Sources: EVS - European Values Study 1999, 2008 - Integrated Dataset: Great Britain, France; World Value Survey waves 3 and 4; USA

There decreasing trends for both United States and England, the former shifting from 30.8% in the early 2000’s to a mere 18.5% from 2010 to 2014, and the latter shifting from 30.9% to 19.5% in 2008. These trends indicate a crisis in public levels of trust in political processes. The
public has notably lost their confidence in the process by which authoritative policies are applied and enforced under the current democratic political structure. Thus the disapproval towards parliament reflects an alarming discontent towards the system in general and indicates a possible change in deep-rooted democratic values of both nations. On the contrary, France has experienced an improving confidence in administration, the public holds an increasingly positive evaluative relation towards parliament shifting from a 35.9% approval rate in 1999 to 43.4% approval rate in the most recent survey. Thus, despite a conflicted relationship with the European Union in general, France displays a steady level of confidence towards its national administrative capacities. In sum, while American and British political orientation has shifted from a relatively allegiant and participative culture to an increasingly alienated sentiment, France has maintained healthy levels of public affection and a steady subject-participant culture.

**Determining ‘sense of self as active political participant’**

For this aspect we considered the level of awareness of survey takers towards their role as active political agents. We chose to illustrate the level of individual civic awareness of the self as a political actor through their involvement in petition signing, which is one of the main means for citizens to engage politically while remaining inside the framework of the democratic system in place. In this particular survey, participants were asked whether they had ever signed a petition. We took into account the percentage of survey takers having answered ‘have done’ (referring to petition signing) in order to give an accurate representation of the level of civic political awareness. Thus, the percentage of citizens having signed petitions reflects their trust in the ability of the system to translate their opinions into policies or reforms.
There is a consistent decrease in civic political participation between 1999 and 2014 for all three countries. This indicates a decreasing confidence in policy maker’s ability to respond to public demands. However, despite this decrease, political involvement remains reassuringly above 60% for all three countries. This shows a healthy participant culture in all three cases despite a growing skepticism towards administrative units and mainstream political parties. Ultimately this can be interpreted as an enduring trust in the democratic model as a system capable of carrying out change and correcting flaws.

- Determining citizen feeling towards government

In order to determine the level of approval towards each country’s government, we based our analysis on the percentage of survey takers evaluating their government as above average. In the case of France and Britain we used an enquiry from the European value survey: Survey takers were asked to evaluate their governments on a scale from 1 to 10: 1 corresponding to ‘very bad’ and 10 corresponding to ‘very good’. We sought to illustrate the general approval rate by considering the percentage of people having rated their government 6/10 in the years 1999 and the most recent survey taken in 2008. In the case of United States we used data from the World Value survey, where survey takers were asked to express their level of confidence towards their government, ranging from ‘none at all’ to ‘a great deal’. We compared the percentage of people having answered ‘quite a lot’ between 2000-2004 to the percentage of people having given the same answer between 2010-2014.
From 1999 to 2014 all three countries experienced a significant decrease in the level of confidence towards government. The percentages were already low in the period of 1999-2004 with U.K having 18.8%, France with 14.2% and U.S with 8%. These numbers descended to 12%, 9.1% and 3.7% for each country during the period ranging from 2008 to 2014. All corresponding governments already had low levels of approval during the first survey and reached alarming levels of public disapproval in the latest enquiries. Thus, as reflected in the decreasing numbers shown in the table, all three countries correspond to a strong Subject political orientation. This can be attributed to a rising gap between the responsibilities of government towards the international community (debt repayment and cutting government spending) and the level of responsiveness of the government towards its citizens. The process of global integration and market openings limits the ability of government to prioritize the will of citizens over its pre-existing treaties with the International community. Kriesi argues that “international pressure in the form of imposition of required measures (austerity) to act responsibly towards the ‘market’ reduces their responsiveness to the national public”, this creates a perceived gap between what the
author calls responsibility and responsiveness. In other words, the responsibility of the State towards international actors (allied states, supra-national entities and international corporations) overshadows their ability to represent and act according to the interests of their citizens. The result is a disillusioned public who no longer believes in the potential of government as a mediator of internal conflicts.

Data from the surveys shows the heterogenous character of the political culture of each of the cases referred too. It is therefore important to emphasize that that the political culture of a nation is inherently subject to internal conflicts and is influenced by changing issues and priorities that affect the voting population. Having taken all of this into account, it is nevertheless beneficial to deduce the dominant political orientations of each country, as the general trend can indicate either congruence or a lack of it between citizens and the democratic system in question.

• Deducing Dominant Political Orientations

Table 1.2 Determining Political Orientations (1999-2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Objects</th>
<th>Score per Country</th>
<th>System as General Object (government) downward</th>
<th>Input objects (political parties) upward</th>
<th>Output Objects (political administration) downward</th>
<th>Self as active participant upward</th>
<th>Dominant Political Orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Subject/Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the early 2000’s both United States and France had a similar participant political orientations, having developed relatively healthy positive evaluations of the democratic infrastructure (parliamentary representation), an acceptance of norms of civic obligation and competence and a sense of identification with political parties. The pre-dominance of a favorable


20 Almond and Verba, The Civic Culture Revisited, 27.
evaluation of most political objects among the population suggests high levels of congruence between civic culture and political structure, meaning that the democratic structure would be expected to endure on the long run. This sense of political allegiance is nevertheless combined with a sense of mistrust towards the government, meaning that although citizens participate in the political system, they remain critical of it and seek to improve it by appealing to the remaining political objects. The general trend is that of ‘dissatisfied democrats’ meaning that party allegiances and the rise of nationalistic and anti-establishment discourses in the last years reflect a disillusioned electorate, who nevertheless still seek to express their discontent through traditional democratic processes.  

England on the contrary is marked by a mixed subject-participant culture where subjects are oriented towards the ‘upward flow’ of policy making. The show support for political parties and the role of self as participant but express discontent towards the ‘downward flow’ of policy enforcement through the system as a general object and the institutions of political administration. What this says about the population is that there is a lack of consensus towards the legitimacy of the democratic system in general. In a mixed subject-participant culture part of the population would express their support for a democratic separation of power (legislative, executive, and judiciary branches) but the alienated sector might tend to support a more centralized authoritarian system. The lack of congruence between the political culture and the democratic system could predict a shift in future political trends. Hence the stability of the democratic system might suffer due to it’s lack of legitimacy within the population and could risk a shift towards authoritarian style governance elected through democratic means of representation.

<table>
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<tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject/Participant</th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>England</th>
<th>France</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subject/Participant</td>
<td>Subject/Participant</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Case Studies**

*France Case Study*

France has remained a predominantly participant culture, demonstrating a persisting sense of allegiance towards the system and its individual parts. Furthermore, it has experienced an upward shift in its orientation towards input objects, output objects and the sense of self as a political agent. In other words, French citizens trust the capacity of the electoral system to carry out the public will, they are satisfied with the role of parliament in law creation and enforcement and have become increasingly politically active between 1999 and 2008. Voting trends as shown in the following chart are in line with the results drawn from the French value surveys between 1999 and 2008.
The voters are generally divided between the two dominant parties, the left-leaning socialist party: Parti Socialiste and the right-leaning republican party: (Rassemblement pour la Republique, Union pour un Mouvement Populaire) which have dominated the electoral process for the most part between 1995 and 2015. Nevertheless, the rise of the anti-establishment party Front National, almost doubling their share of the votes between 2007 and 2012, points to a shifting trend in French political culture. It has successfully rallied supporters based on a controversial nationalistic and protectionist agenda contrary to Hollande’s classical free market and socially liberal discourse. Thus, the working class electorate that has historically supported the left has been won over by Le Pen by adopting an anti-globalization and anti-neoliberalist platform. Le Pen’s platform, distancing the country from the EU, raising protectionist tariffs and curbing immigration corresponds to the adoption of materialist values by a large segment of the population. The straying away from values such as tolerance and freedom of expression and the preference for economic growth and national security matters shows that there is a sense of

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22 Some of the data applied in the analysis in this publication are based on material from the “European Election Database”. The data are collected from original sources, prepared and made available by the NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD). NSD are not responsible for the analyses/interpretation of the data presented here.

23 Accetti Invernizzi, Carlo and Christopher Bikerton. 2016. ‘Neither Left Nor Right In France’. Foreign Affairs. https://wwwforeignaffairs.com/articles/france/2016-02-18/neither-left-nor-right-france
alienation within the electorate, whom may feel that mainstream parties no longer represent their interests.

“For the first four decades since it’s creation in 1972” writes Accetti referring to the FN, “the party was consistently dismissed as a marginal and anomalous phenomenon”.24 Despite its past as a marginal contender, the Front National has emerged as one of the main candidates to win the 2017 National Election. The other favorite is Emmanuel Macron, running as an independent and distancing himself from all mainstream parties. Mr Macron contrasts Le Pen by championing the EU, favoring open borders and global trade.25 The popularity of these two political-outcasts shows that the public is increasingly skeptical towards the traditional left-right spectrum. They have become dissatisfied with the upward flow of policy making through traditional political parties but continue to trust a democratic electoral system to change the current government agenda by electing a non-traditional party. The French National Election has become a battle between ‘outsiders’, both of which profit from their disassociation from establishment politics and mainstream parties.

• U.S Case Study

In the span of a decade the political orientation of the United States shifted from a dominantly participant culture to an increasingly alienated subject-participant culture. Its support for downwards policy enforcement mechanisms such as the parliament and the government have gone down. As for the upward flow of policy making, the number of voters who feel alienated from the republican/ democrat scheme has dramatically increased from 21.4% to 39% and the sense of civic duty (as represented through the percentage of petition signers) has decreased from 80.7% to 60.1% over the past decade. Hence, citizens continue to have a strong sense of civic duty as seen in the significant percentage of petition signers, but there is an increasing sense of detachment towards every other political object. The public alienation towards the bipartisan system and the lack of trust towards government in general lead us to question to what extent we can begin talking about a real crisis of democracy in the United States. The graphs bellow represent the party allegiances of the popular vote and the electoral college respectively as illustrated with data from the last 6 Presidential Elections from 1996 to the current day.

24 Ibid.

The party allegiances of the general public illustrated in the first graph correspond to the evolution of the political orientation as described using Almond and Verba’s model. We are concerned particularly with the evolution of dissident voters, having voted neither democrat nor republican. The data from the 2000-2004 value survey expressed positive orientations towards 3
out of 4 political objects (See Table 1.2), marking a healthy level of congruence between political culture and political structure and processes. This trend is reflected in the almost non-existing percentage of deviant (other) votes between 2000 and 2004. With Table 1.3 we deduced a shift towards a subject/participant political culture in the United States, expressed by a decrease in the orientation towards all political objects. This is reflected in the shift from 1.4% dissident or other popular votes in the 2008 presidential elections to an unsettling 4.3% in 2016. In addition there is a striking lack of congruence between the party allegiances of the popular vote and those of the electoral college.

Sources: The American Presidency Project (1999 - 2017), Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley

The Electoral College vote accurately represented the popular vote from the years 1996 to 2004. However since the 2008 presidential election there has been a striking gap where the Electoral College showed an exaggerated support towards the Democratic Party with 67.8% of votes whereas popular vote for the same party was a modest 52.9%. The lack of congruence between popular vote and the electoral college vote reached new heights with this year’s elections where paradoxically, popular vote leaned towards the Democratic Party with 47.9% of the votes while the Electoral College allowed the Republican Party to take the presidency with a majority of 56.9%. Thus, for the second time in the last 2 decades since George W. Bush was elected president in the year 2000, the Republican candidate Donald Trump has been elected by obtaining the majority vote in the Electoral College despite losing the popular vote 46.7% to 47.9%. The lack of compatibility between the subject-participant culture of the U.S and the current system in place point to a crisis of representation within the structure.


The U.S public has rarely been so divided and polarized among two candidates, but what Trump has successfully proven with his populist, authoritarian discourse, is that a large segment of the American population no longer feels represented by traditional political values which his opponent sought to maintain throughout the presidential race. His campaign gained momentum because it “succeeded in mobilizing a neglected and underrepresented slice of the electorate, the white working class” who no longer felt represented by the Left.\textsuperscript{28} Inglehart writes that “It is not accidental that authoritarian regimes that arise in political systems with mixed subject-participant cultures tend to have populistic overtones”.\textsuperscript{29} Thus, Trump’s strong man tactic fits in perfectly with Almond and Verba’s theory. For this reason, within the American formally democratic structure, the authoritarian-oriented Republican party was brought to compete with Hillary’s democratic one, showing that a large segment of American voters are loosing faith in democratic discourse and values (equality, common good, diversity and the rule of law) and leaning towards centralized authoritarian discourses.

Inglehart’s scarcity hypothesis is a good framework for analyzing the possible value shift within the American electorate. “Virtually everyone aspires to freedom and autonomy, but people tend to place the highest value on the most pressing needs.”\textsuperscript{30} The traditional democratic discourse as put fourth by Hillary Clinton’s presidential campaign emphasizes post-materialist values such as autonomy, self-expression and the quality of life.\textsuperscript{31} She emphasized America’s role in global leadership instead of focusing solely on national security matters, and promised to focus on inequality and education\textsuperscript{32}. The problem with this strategy was that it ignored the effects of the 2008 economic crisis over the priorities of a significant amount of the population. The economic crisis led to increased unemployment, stagnating incomes and cuts in government spending which directly affected middle class voters. The economic security that had allowed for the proliferation of post-materialist values was greatly damaged by the crisis and shifted priorities towards materialistic goals such as economic growth, maintaining order, fighting crime and job security. President Trump’s campaign slogan ‘Make America Great Again’ has strong

\textsuperscript{28} Fukuyama, Francis. 2016. ‘Trump And American Political Decay’. Foreign Affairs. https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2016-11-09/trump-and-american-political-
\textsuperscript{29} Almond and Verba. The Civic Culture Revisited. 24.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
materialistic undertones. His political platform emphasizes national security, promising to deliver travel bans on countries accused of being terrorist havens, he promises to increase the economic growth rate and create jobs.\textsuperscript{33} Inglehart indicated that self-expression values are strongly linked to good governance and the flourishing of democratic institutions.\textsuperscript{34} Trumps doctrine seems to be going in the opposite direction, emphasizing security over post-materialistic values, which have been the pillars of western democracy for so long. Whether or not Trump’s victory can be interpreted as a threat to the democratic system as a whole is a matter of debate. However, his anti-establishment discourse and his unilateral approach to governance do indicate a high level of dissatisfaction with the current state of democracy within a large segment of American voters.

\textit{• England Case Study}

What was already evident in the U.K’s estranged subject political orientation in the 1999 value survey has been magnified a decade later. Between 1999 and 2008, the mistrust towards the government and parliamentary systems as well as the alienation towards dominant political parties have increased dramatically from 18.4\% non-allegiants to 46.4\% in 2008.\textsuperscript{35} Nevertheless the British citizen continues to have a strong sense of civic duty, choosing to remain active in domains such as petition-signing. There is an evident lack of congruence between the political culture and the democratic tradition as seen in the graph below representing party allegiance tendencies over the last four parliamentary elections.


\textsuperscript{34} Inglehart, Ronald. ‘Changing Values Among Western Publics From 1970 To 2006’.

\textsuperscript{35} European Value Survey 1999, 2008
The traditional Conservative and Labour parties dominated the elections from 1997 to 2001. In turn, Liberal Democrats and alternative parties only garnered a minimal percentage of the votes. However this tendency changed with votes being distributed more equally among Conservative, Labour and LD parties in 2005, while votes for non-mainstream parties increased exponentially to 10% that same year. Overall, the general trends from 1997 to 2010 have seen a slight increase of 6% of total votes for the Conservatives, a sharp decrease for the Labour party from 43.21% to 29% and a striking increase for Liberal Democrats and other marginal parties. The rise of alternative parties can be explained mainly by an anti-establishment, anti-EU sentiment that has been growing in the UK since this decade’s euro crises, putting in question the Union’s potential as an entity capable of delivering prosperity. As a consequence, the Conservative party has sought to appeal to these frustrated, traditionally left-leaning voters who no longer felt like the Labour Party represented its interests. Hence, on a platform based on the promise of more jobs, higher wages, increased sovereignty and limited immigration, the Conservative political elite fueled a very potent Leave Campaign that led to a sweeping victory.

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during this year’s referendum. The vote to leave the EU reflected a sense of resentment in marginal northern cities and country-sides who felt “left out of the prosperity that integration into a global economy brought to London”. Thus, Brexit is ultimately the culmination of a growing subject-participant culture that has lost trust in liberal discourse and European institutions. The Conservative party’s success goes back to the shift towards materialist values within the population; prioritizing economic growth, job security and protectionist measures. As seen in the case of the United-States, the victory of a conservative nationalistic and anti-establishment platform points to a dissatisfaction towards traditional authorities, however this does not mean that the democratic system itself is at risk. As Russel J. Dalton explains, “people have grown cynical about political parties and other institutions of democratic government, but they express support for the democratic creed”. The victory of the Brexit campaign shows that liberal/ postmaterialist values such as inclusivity, and freedom of expression are being disassociated with democracy. Electing a right-wing authoritarian style party to run a country with a strong democratic tradition shows that the meaning of democracy may be changing for the people. It is no longer directly tied to notions of tolerance, diversity and individual freedom. As a reaction to economic insecurity, as Inglehart predicts, the British population may have sacrificed self-expression priorities for a strong authority figure that promises to “protect them from danger”. Thus, Brexit hints at a rejection of traditional democratic authorities, but at the same time shows the population’s trust in democratic processes (such as referendum and elections) to translate their new priorities into policies.

**Verifying Hypotheses Based on Empirical Evidence**

This study sought to track the evolution of the political culture of three different countries using Almond and Verba’s theory, proposing the subject’s level of orientation towards different political objects as the basis for determining their dominant political culture. Based on four survey questions drawn from the World and the European Value surveys we deduced the following about each country:

1. France remained a dominantly participant culture throughout the last decade despite the rise of Front National and Macron’s independent campaign as the new competition of the traditional Republican and Socialist parties. Citizens are thus oriented towards most

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38 Ibid.

39 Dalton, Russel J. “Partisanship And Voting”.

40 Inglehart, Ronald. “Changing Values Among Western Publics From 1970 To 2006”.
political objects and choose to vent their discontent through the current democratic means of representation.

2. The United States has shifted from a participant to a subject-participant culture between 2000 and 2014. The population’s approval for all political objects have decreased over the last decade expressing a sense of alienation towards the system in general. The populist and authoritarian discourse adopted by the Republican Party have sought to appeal to an under-represented working class who traditionally tended to vote democratic.

3. England has remained a subject-participant culture, having low levels of approval towards most political objects in 1999 that have only been magnified in the last decade. The anti-establishment and frustration expressed by a large percentage of the electoral segment have been exploited by the Conservative party, winning a referendum based on the dissatisfaction expressed by the marginalized working class.

From the evolution of these three countries we can say the following about the hypothesis suggested earlier:

H1. Political Culture and Orientation is a good indicator of party allegiance trends:

The level of orientation towards each of the political objects is a good predictor of party allegiances when their particular platforms are taken into account. Traditional parties often incorporate public sentiment to appeal to a wider range of the electorate, which is what makes democracy such a resistant model in the first place. Hence, **H1 is verified** in so much as we consider the present discourse of each party rather than their historical stances.

H2. Political Culture and Orientation can predict a possible shift in the political system itself:

Almond and Verba stated that a mixed subject-participant culture could be a good indicator of a shifting political system because its legitimacy is increasingly challenged by an underrepresented and alienated segment of the population. Thus, a decreasing level of affection of the population towards particular political objects can predict the loss of congruence and compatibility between the population and the system in place. Thus, the victory of authoritarian and non-establishment parties in England and the EU (which corresponded to Almond and Verba’s measure of subject-participant orientation) **verifies H2**.

**Conclusion**

In sum, Almond and Verba’s theory of political orientation continues to be an accurate predictor of party allegiances and is a useful framework to analyze current voting trends. The notion of a subject-participant orientation allows us to understand the latest shift towards
authoritarian discourses and explains the process by which a centralized authoritarian model can be elected through democratic means.

The most important thing to take away from this study is that the legitimacy of the political structure and its process depends on the will of the political subject to recognize and support it. Hence, in the case of the three countries in question, judging from the rise of anti-establishment discourses in the political realm (Front National, Leave Campaign and ‘Make America Great Again’) we can assume that there is a latent crisis of legitimacy varying in scale from one country to the other. In the case of England and the U.S, their subject-participant orientations justifies the victory of anti-establishment whereas in France, although Le Pen’s party is gaining momentum, the persistence of a positive evaluation of political elements would suggest that a more centrist and liberal campaign (such as Macron’s independent movement) is more likely to win the 2017 national elections. However, the strong presence of Front National as the possible runner up instead of Parti Socialiste or the Republicans should serve as a wake-up call to Europe and democracies around the world.

The people are no longer satisfied with the status quo, democracy for the most part has failed to deliver on the promise of economic development and inclusivity that it has promised the world for so long. We can interpret this in light of a shift from post-materialist values of individual rights to a rise in materialist values (protectionism and economic growth) as a result of the Great Recession in 2008. Paul Taggart states that populism of the kind that we are seeing nowadays tends to be a reaction to a sense of extreme crisis. An economic recession of the magnitude of the 2008 recession causes a reevaluation of priorities within the electorate, which translates into a shift towards alternative parties. Inglehart would suggest that the political prominence of populist right-wing parties is a result of economic stagnation and job insecurity produced by the 2008 economic crisis. Hence, Right wing parties are successfully exploiting the frustrations of the working middle class whom traditionally voted for Left Wing parties. Under the platform of economic liberalization and cultural protectionism, Right Wing parties have successfully articulated working middle class priorities into a political agenda. The discourse promises to hold back on government intervention in the economic arena and return to a ‘laissez-faire’ policy while creating barriers to immigration in order to prioritize local jobs. Trump’s victory in the United States and Theresa May’s mandate in the U.K might be the proof that democracy might not be the

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42 Inglehart, Ronald. ‘Changing Values Among Western Publics From 1970 To 2006’. 
'end of history' as Francis Fukuyama predicted in 1992. On the contrary, with the rise of Euroskepticism in European countries and with an electorate increasingly dissatisfied with the traditional democratic process in the States, people are strikingly willing to let authoritarian-style governance back in the driver’s seat. This is seen in the return of ‘strong man’ politics, where a powerful authoritarian leader promises to impose reform and ‘get things done’ where a slow, inefficient democratic process failed to deliver. To what extent are we willing to give up on democratic values of tolerance, inclusion and individual rights for the sake of the Authoritarian promise of efficiency? The risk lies in the possible shift towards a unilateral style governance which promises to deliver the ‘people’s will’, hence taking advantage of the current crisis of representation that western democracy is experiencing. One of the main contradictions lies in the fact that these rising right-wing populist parties denounce the inability of the current democratic institutions to connect to citizens while at the same time seeking to obtain electoral consent within the same framework. They tend to claim “immediate response to the people’s will and the favouring of the notion of representation as resemblance of the representative to the elector”44 The big issue is that these parties fail to propose alternative solutions to representation as practiced in the democratic systems we have studied. In fact, as seen throughout the study they “regularly participate in elections and accept the rules of the representative system”.45 This is particularly revealing of the paradox surrounding the debate in regards to the crisis of legitimacy of western democracy. Right wing parties are growing stronger by using people’s frustrations with mainstream political actors and the current system of representation but do not generally seek to change the status quo. For this reason we are lead to believe that the populist upsurge may prove to be merely a reactionary phase to the 2008 economic crisis, or on the other hand may lead to the tangible demise of the current democratic system if we fail to listen to these grievances. The crisis of democracy in France, United States and England should serve as a lesson to policy makers to truly listen to what people are saying. It is becoming increasingly urgent to seek means to facilitate dialogue between institutions on multiple scales of governance and the citizens that their decisions affect.


45 Ibid.
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